



The Human Services Workforce Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential



Prepared by
the National Institute on Out-of-School Time for Cornerstones for Kids

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Setting the Stage for a Youth Development Associate Credential

**A National Review of Professional Credentials for the
Out-of-School Time Workforce**

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Cornerstones for Kids Introduction

The Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI) is focused on the frontline workers serving vulnerable children and families. HSWI's premise is that human services matter. Delivered well, they can, and do, positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, often at critical points in their lives.

We believe that the quality of the frontline worker influences the effectiveness of services they deliver to children and families. If workers are well-trained and supported, have access to the resources that they need, possess a reasonable workload, and are valued by their employers, it follows that they will be able to effectively perform their jobs. If, however, they are as vulnerable as the children and families that they serve, they will be ineffective in improving outcomes for children and families.

Unfortunately, all indications today are that our frontline human services workforce is struggling. In some instances poor compensation contributes to excessive turnover; in others an unreasonable workload and endless paperwork render otherwise capable staff ineffective; and keeping morale up is difficult in the human services fields. It is remarkable that so many human services professionals stick to it, year after year.

HSWI's mission is to work with others to raise the visibility of, and sense of urgency about, workforce issues. Through a series of publications and other communications efforts we hope to

- Call greater attention to workforce issues
- Help to describe and define the status of the human services workforce
- Disseminate data on current conditions
- Highlight best and promising practices
- Suggest systemic and policy actions that can make a deep, long-term difference

In this paper the National Institute on Out-of-School Time reviews efforts to create professional and career development systems in the field of youth work. The report describes evidence of the value of credentialing programs in enhancing the workforce and improving the quality of programs and positive outcomes for youth. The report also includes information from the field of early care and education, which has considerable experience with professional development through credentials that provides valuable lessons for the field of youth work. A matrix compares the essentials of many of the programs in both fields.

Additional information on the human services workforce, and on HSWI, is available at www.cornerstones4kids.org.

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Achieve Boston is a collaborative effort to establish a professional development system for after-school and youth workers—those who work with children and youth ages 5 to 22 during the out-of-school time hours. Achieve Boston’s mission is to improve the overall quality of after-school and youth programs by ensuring that program staff at all levels have access to comprehensive educational opportunities that enable them to strengthen their skills, develop their knowledge base, and advance along their chosen career path.

INTRODUCTION

Through the past decade, the out-of-school time (OST) field has seen demand for services increase dramatically. A number of societal factors have influenced this demand and the subsequent changing dynamics of the OST field. First, the reality of more women entering the workforce created a greater need for adult-supervised activities after school. The need for child-care to support welfare reform also heightened OST issues for policymakers. The emerging field of research on the benefits of OST programs to deter youth crime and improve children's social and academic skills has stimulated a greater public interest in after-school programs. Finally, the growing emphasis on educational standards and accountability favors the development of supplemental learning opportunities to support children in their academic achievements. As the demand for OST services and the complexity of the OST field continue to grow more will be expected of child and youth workers in the future; however, resources to support these outcomes must keep pace with demands on OST programming.

This increased attention on OST programs has heightened the importance of appropriate training and preparation for OST staff. In order to promote positive outcomes for youth, staff need to be skilled in the theories and practices of child and youth development and other core competencies necessary for effective youth work. Recently, individual states and national organizations have begun developing credentials to address the training and education needs of the OST workforce. A credential is defined as a certification that recognizes an individual's performance based on a set of defined skills and knowledge. Additionally, credentials provide an opportunity for youth workers to establish a career path and gain professional recognition for demonstrating competence on the job.

Although Professional and Career Development Systems have emerged around the country, few of these programs have targeted the OST field specifically. Over the last three years Boston, Massachusetts, has laid the groundwork and field tested elements of a professional development infrastructure for youth workers. Boston is now piloting the Youth Development Associate (YDA) Credential as a critical element of this professional development system. The YDA is an entry-level credential for school-age professionals and youth workers that will be linked to a continuum of coordinated education and training opportunities along with connections to career pathway options. The foundation for the YDA program is built on the principle that all youth workers should share a common base of knowledge and skills that when employed effectively lead to more positive youth outcomes. The mission of the credential program is to improve the overall quality of after-school and youth programs by ensuring that program staff have access to comprehensive educational opportunities that enable them to strengthen their skills, develop their knowledge, and advance in their careers.

As a preliminary step toward the development and pilot implementation of the Youth Development Associate (YDA) Credential, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) has undertaken a national review of current credentialing efforts and the impact credentials have had on the out-of-school time field. To produce this report NIOST conducted an extensive literature review of relevant reports, data, and records regarding the implementation, utilization, and effectiveness of credentials in OST and related fields. NIOST worked closely with the Wingspread Coalition, National Collaboration for Youth, Forum for Youth Investment, and National Afterschool Association to identify key informants and existing credentials.

Structured telephone interviews were conducted with 20 key informants, including experts in youth work, early care and education, after-school education, higher education, human development, and public policy.

Gleaning lessons, candid opinions, and data from those who have earned a credential, administered programs, and evaluated the impact of credentials this review provides an assessment of the utility and benefits of credentials to improve the quality of OST services and working conditions for OST staff. While this scan is devoted primarily to professional development and credentials in the OST field, in some cases there have been more advances and research in the Early Care and Education (ECE) field. Therefore, we acknowledge, that due to the limited amount of formal research on credentialing for youth workers, this report relies heavily on evaluation research from the early care and education field. In addition, we cite several examples from the ECE field that offer important lessons about credentials and their potential in the OST field.

This report provides:

- A brief overview of the current OST workforce and the conditions that have led to the need for and rise of OST professional development systems and credentials
- Summary data on the impact and utility of existing credentials in terms of career retention and advancement, salary and benefit increases, and quality programming
- An appraisal of the role of higher education institutions and the market forces that encourage and/or hinder participation in credential programs
- A review of the policy, infrastructure, and/or systems that support credentials.
- Lessons learned from these early efforts and experts in the fields
- A description of the Youth Development Associate (YDA) as defined and being piloted in Boston, Massachusetts

This report also offers an appendix including selected case studies on credentials and a matrix of common credential requirements. This appendix is in no way intended to be a full list of all credentials available, but provides a cross section of different types of credentials and, where it is available, information on the documented effectiveness of these credentials.

We hope that this report will help guide Achieve Boston's YDA planning and development and may inform other states and organizations considering developing credentials.

SECTION I: THE OST WORKFORCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The OST Workforce

The challenges that the OST workforce currently faces can be summarized to include the following:

- Wide variance in the professional attitudes, knowledge, and skills among direct care staff members
- High rates of turnover
- Difficulty in attracting new staff members with motivation to become proficient practitioners and
- The challenge of training new staff to meet the needs of children and youth (Le Menestrel & Dennehy, 2003; Morgan, 2002; National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2004; Thomas, 2002)

The current workforce crisis in child and youth care has been exacerbated in part by rapid growth and frequent changes in the field itself. The recent expansion of the OST field has created multiple sectors (such as, after-school programs, youth development programs, camps, activity-based programs, prevention programs, etc.), each with its own funding streams, regulations, training requirements, and professional associations or meetings. This multilayered approach—which may have been a great benefit to youth and families—actually has inhibited professional development in many instances (Morgan, 1998).

Currently, there is no agreed-upon definition of which groups of workers are included in the term “out-of-school time field.” For example, some define the OST field broadly to include all of the following: early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education, family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential treatment centers, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric centers, rehabilitation programs, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs. However, most professional development programs have been designed to target only a small subsection of those job categories, such as early care and education practitioners, before- and after-school program staff or prevention program workers.

Further, within the OST field there are few agreed-upon job titles or job descriptions for youth workers. According to a recent survey conducted by the Academy for Educational Development Center for Youth Development and Policy Research and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, the out-of-school time workforce lacks a clear professional identity. When questioned about their job title, 350 respondents reported 207 different titles. Direct-line staff alone reported approximately 20 job titles, including child-care worker, instructor/teacher, youth worker/leader, and recreation specialist (LeMenestrel & Dennehy, 2003).

There are also several diverse paths that may lead workers to a job or career in the OST field. Because there is no specific degree or career ladder, workers may be equipped with a variety of skills and enter the workforce with a broad range of educational levels and training. Workers often do not share a common knowledge base of quality program indicators or, at times, even a common language.

The part-time nature of OST work has created an additional barrier for many OST workers to participating in professional development opportunities. Scholarship programs, for example, often include participation requirements, such as working a minimum of 30 hours per week, that ultimately exclude most OST workers. And finally the splintered community prevents the effective use of cross-training and shared training, which would encourage information sharing and opportunities to learn from one another (Morgan, 1998).

Professional Development Systems

In an effort to reduce turnover rates and increase the presence of an educated, stable OST workforce many states have developed supports for workers, including increased training options, scholarships, and formal professional development systems.

Attempts to address the professional development needs of the out-of-school time workforce—at the practitioner, program, and system levels—have been ongoing for several years. Since the 1990s the OST field has been boldly advocating for a comprehensive professional development system. The Next Generation Youth Worker Coalition defines a system as “a dynamic set of interrelated parts that deliver the desired result when activated in combination with each other” (Forum for Youth Investment, 2005). National researchers and advocates support this definition and further outline a well-designed and articulated professional development system as having each of the following interrelated components:

- Core Competencies that define what staff need to know and do to work effectively with children and youth
- A Training System that is grounded in the core competencies and is responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce
- A Training and Trainer Approval System that ensures the quality of both the content and delivery of training
- A Professional Registry that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field
- Career Lattice and Pathways that link roles, responsibilities and salary ranges (Armory, 2002; Costley, 1991 and 1998; DeBord, 2002; Gannett, 2001; Halpern, 2003; Morgan, 2002)

The early care and education community has had tremendous success in implementing comprehensive professional development systems as outlined above. Currently, all 50 states have implemented components of a professional development system for the ECE field (Armory, Morgan, et al., 2002; National Child Care Information Center, n.d.). The ECE experience can offer many lessons and opportunities for professionalizing the OST field as well. As a result of these successful ECE efforts several states, including California, Connecticut, and Maine, have added school-age care components to their ECE professional development systems. However, these efforts have often been limited to school-age care programs and have not included youth workers working with teens or in settings outside of schools or child-care centers.

Despite lacking a comprehensive system for OST workers, many states have provided professional supports, such as training opportunities and increased scholarships, targeted to the OST workforce. Several states also added licensing regulations to their administrative code with an emphasis on increasing quality, requiring participation in training and education, and teaching

core competencies to workers. Wage and other reward incentives also have been employed to encourage participation in training and to enhance stability and support in the workplace.

Today such states as Alaska, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maine Massachusetts, Michigan, and New York are all at various stages of developing youth worker and/or school-age professional development programs that include core competencies, career lattices, and coursework. (See Appendix A, page 29, for more examples of professional development programs for the OST and ECE workforce.)

Credentials

Credentialing as a strategy for professionalizing the OST field and improving workforce conditions is increasingly gaining popularity. A credential is defined as a certification that recognizes an individual's performance based on a set of defined skills and knowledge. Credentials define the types of training (based on core competencies), the number of hours of training, and the evidence of skill development required for the job. Additionally, credentials provide an opportunity for adults working with youth to gain professional recognition for demonstrating competence on the job.

A credential is just one component of a comprehensive statewide professional development system that cannot and should not stand alone as a workforce strategy. In order to keep practitioners in the field and motivated, states need to establish clearly defined routes to career advancement, often called career lattices or career pathways. A career pathway or career lattice, as opposed to a ladder, recognizes that there are multiple ways or paths one may choose and develop in order to advance a career. Essentially, a career lattice defines the training and qualifications for various levels of position and compensation. The career lattice facilitates movement within the field by specifying various job titles, education requirements, experience requirements, and job positions, allowing practitioners to move from entry-level to mastery-level roles. A person with the proper training and education can enter this lattice at any position and know exactly what he/she needs to do to advance positions.

In the early 1990s a handful of states (Wisconsin, New York, Georgia, Colorado, Michigan, and Florida, among others) enthusiastically embraced the school-age credential (SAC) modeled after the Army School Age Credential. In 2005, Indiana launched a combined school-age and youth development credential.

Boston, Massachusetts, is now piloting a similar version called the Youth Development Associate (YDA) Credential, an entry-level credential for school-age and youth worker professionals. The YDA credential will be linked to a continuum of coordinated education and training opportunities along with connections to career pathway options. It is seen as a lynchpin of an out-of-school time professional development system that coordinates all of the pieces into an articulated credential that recognizes and rewards staff competence and achievement. While the YDA is inspired by the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, it is specifically designed for after-school and youth workers. Its appeal is based on its potential to become a national credential for practitioners and youth workers in the after-school environments, in residential centers, and in public school settings. (For more information about credential programs, see Appendix A, page 30.)

SECTION II: THE IMPACT OF CREDENTIALS

Despite the growth in professional development programs, there have been few formal scientific evaluations to measure their success. However, there has been a tremendous amount of research in both the out-of-school time (OST) and early care and education (ECE) fields demonstrating that more highly educated staff provide higher quality services to children and youth and promote healthier working environments.

Some credentialing and professional development programs have tracked participation rates and documented workplace improvements through pre- and post-program surveys with participants. And a few formal evaluations have been conducted with a small number of graduates. These early tracking efforts along with the few formal evaluations available provide important insight into credentials' effectiveness and impact on the workforce and working conditions.

This section of the report will summarize available research findings demonstrating the impact of professional development programs and credentials on the OST and ECE workforce. Specifically this section will look at how increased education and training have

- Improved services to children and families
- Improved working conditions for child and youth workers
- Had direct and indirect influence on higher education course offerings and ECE/OST workers' participation in higher education and finally
- Influenced public policy changes supporting credentialing and professional development systems

Improved Services to Children, Youth, and Families

There is an immense amount of research in the OST and ECE fields demonstrating that high-quality services improve future outcomes for children and that the key to quality programming is a high-quality, skilled, stable, educated, and motivated workforce.

The positive relationship between OST and ECE providers' educational preparation and the quality of children's experiences is routinely reported in research. Studies consistently identify caregivers' specialized training and education as one of the strongest predictors of child-care quality and maintain that ongoing training is necessary for continuous quality improvements (Arnett, 1989; Cost Quality & Child Outcome Study Team, 1995; Howes, Whitebook, & Phillips, 1992; Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000; MARS, 2005; Munton, Mooney, & Rowland, 1996).

Research has demonstrated that OST staff is a critical link in achieving positive outcomes for youth by developing and sustaining supportive relationships with youth (Bodilly, S. and M. Beckett, 2005). The 2005 Massachusetts After-School Research Study (MARS) found that programs with highly educated staff provided higher quality services and were more likely to help youth reach more positive outcomes (MARS 2005) (Bodilly, S. and M. Beckett 2005; Noam, Biancasosa, Dechaussay, 2002). This information is supported by additional research that reports high-quality programs have staff and program directors with strong educational credentials, as well as extensive experience working with youth (MARS 2005; Gambone, Klem, Connell, 2002).

Previous research in after-school and education programs has pointed to the importance of program staff in providing a high-quality experience for youth (for example, see Rosenthal and Vandell, 1996; Pianta, 1999; Thompson and Kelly-Vance, 2001; Commission on Children at Risk, 2003). Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of staff characteristics in the MARS study had significant relationships with program quality. The MARS study found that programs with more highly educated staff, both at the program director and direct service levels, were rated significantly higher on program quality, including staff engagement, youth engagement, activities, and homework time. In addition, working conditions of the staff also were associated with quality in a variety of areas. Higher wages (often associated with higher education) were linked with higher quality in all areas except communication with families, and more training was related to higher quality staff engagement. Increases in children's homework persistence and completion were related to programs with more highly educated staff and directors, as well as with lower staff turnover (MARS, 2005).

In 2001, the RAND Corporation reviewed all existing studies of afters-school program quality. While concluding that there were few studies following high scientific standards, RAND found a number of program practices that the data supported as good indicators of program quality. These indicators include staff training, education, and compensation, low child-to-staff ratio, age-appropriate activities, positive emotional climate, communication with school and families, and community partnerships (Beckett, Hawken et al., 2001).

Preliminary findings from the New York School Age Care Credential evaluation (2006) suggest that training programs have had a positive impact on program quality in school-age settings. Through pre- and post-credential assessments, program improvements were documented in interactions among staff and school-age children, implementation of activities, overall program structure, space, and furnishings among providers who received the credential. Changes were not seen in program quality for those in the comparison group, who did not obtain youth worker credential training (McCable & Cochran, 2006).

National research supports similar findings for early education and care programs and provides strong evidence of the importance of professional development to program quality and to young children's school readiness. "Quality of care ultimately boils down to the quality of the relationship between the...provider or teacher and the child. A beautiful space and an elaborate curriculum—like a beautiful home—can be impressive, but without skilled and stable...providers, they will not promote positive development" (Shonkoff, 1998).

In an extensive review of the state of the field, the National Research Council reported that "both formal education levels and recent, specialized training in child development have been found quite consistently to be associated with high-quality interactions and children's development in center-based, family day care, and even in in-home sitter arrangements" (Shonkoff, 2000). In a series of studies of Massachusetts' early education and care programs in centers, public schools, and family child-care homes, teacher and provider education was found to be a strong and consistent predictor of the quality of programming (Marshall, et al, 2005). For example, in family child-care homes, providers' formal education was the strongest predictor of the quality of the program; the more years of formal education that a provider had completed, the higher the quality scores she received. In addition, holding constant the number of years of formal

education, providers who held a CDA credential offered significantly higher quality programs than did providers who did not hold a CDA credential, but had similar levels of formal education. Specifically, among providers without a college education, providers with a CDA provided higher quality programs than did providers without a CDA (Marshall, et al, 2003).

Improved Work Environments

Clearly, credentialing, training, and formal education in child and youth care practices make a difference in the quality of care and services children, youth, and families receive, as demonstrated above. Also of interest is the impact of credentials and improved youth worker training on working conditions, such as wages, turnover, job satisfaction, and career advancement. Based on the experience and information gathered thus far, credentials have been shown to

- Increase workers' self confidence and feelings of efficacy in performing their jobs
- Increase workers' skills and knowledge
- Encourage providers' pursuit of higher education
- Increase salaries and
- Reduce turnover rates

Below are some prime examples of the effectiveness and future potential of credentials as a professional development strategy to improve working conditions for ECE and OST workers.

The Child Development Associate Credential(CDA) has been available to the early care and education community since 1975. Through ongoing surveys of CDA graduates the Council on Professional Recognition has documented that the credential has served as a professional pathway, especially for minority women and adult learners. The CDA Credential has been shown to be an entry into higher education for many participants. Despite the stipulation that education need not be credit-bearing, 40 percent of CDAs receive college credit, most ranging between 3 and 12 credits. The CDA Credential appears to have successfully fostered workers' professional self-perception and even provided professional advancement for some. CDA workers testify to increased confidence, achievement, and efficacy. CDA recipients have demonstrated a remarkably high retention rate. In 1999 a longitudinal comparison found that even among the veteran group of CDA recipients almost 77 percent were still in the ECE field a full 10 years after receiving credentialing. Thirty-two percent of all CDA survey respondents reported receiving a promotion upon earning the credential. Finally, the 2004 National Survey found significant increases in the annual salaries of CDA recipients from the time of award to the survey (Deen and Bailey, 2004).

A RAND study of the Military Child Care Act (MCCA)—which mandated increased training and tied training completion to wage incentives for all military-based ECE and OST staff—found that the military's wage policy had a number of positive effects on staff quality and helped achieve the goals of a better-trained and more stable workforce. RAND confirmed that wages increased from pre-MCCA levels, turnover was reduced significantly, and the wage program provided a strong incentive for staff to complete the training—essentially “weeding-out” less motivated caregivers. Turnover declined from over 300 percent pre-MCCA to below 30 percent after the implementation; and 95 percent of program managers reported some or significant

improvements in the quality of care and services being provided (Duff Campbell, Applebaum, Martinson, and Martin, 2000).

In 2001-2002, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project reported over 4,300 teachers, directors and family child-care providers received T.E.A.C.H. ® scholarships; over 3,000 of those scholarships supported child-care professionals taking courses leading to an Associate's Degree in early childhood education. Teachers participating in the scholarship program leading to the degree completed an average of 14 semester hours per contract, saw their compensation improve by over 13 percent annually, and left their child-care centers at a rate of less than 9 percent per year (Child Care Services Association, 2004).

More than 8,100 providers in North Carolina received a WAGE\$ supplement during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. WAGE\$ provides cash payments directly to ECE teachers who hold credentials or degrees and work in the same child-care program for a minimum of six months. The supplements range from \$200 to \$6,250 annually for teachers, assistant teachers, and family child-care providers. The average annual supplement was \$1,148 per participant. During the 2004-2005 program year statewide, North Carolina had a turnover rate of 24 percent; WAGE\$ participant turnover was 16 percent. Also 29 percent of active WAGE\$ participants completed additional coursework, and 18 percent reached a higher wage supplement level.

Cornell University has documented that by earning the Family Development Credential (FDC) front-line family support workers have developed highly effective skills in helping families, while at the same time reducing stress and promoting well being in their own lives (Mosley and Smith, 2004). Additionally in a preliminary evaluation of the New York School Age Care Credential, Cornell researchers found that approximately 40 percent of those who earned the school-age credential received a raise (McCable and Cochran, 2006).

The BEST (Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers) Youth Worker Certificate Program is a training program that addresses such areas as youth development, core competencies, and common language frameworks. BEST youth workers acknowledged and demonstrated increased awareness, competence, and efficacy in their jobs as youth workers after completing the BEST training. Pre-and post-training surveys, as documented by the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work (NTI), found that 75 percent of BEST graduates increased youth involvement in program development while shifting from adult-centered orientation to youth-centered perspective. This shift in programming approach greatly enhances the possibility of more positive outcomes for youth as supported by MARS' findings that youth engagement is the strongest predictor of positive youth outcomes (NIOST, 2005). Furthermore, BEST graduates' supervisors reported that the training helped youth development workers find the value in activities that contribute to youth outcomes.

Participation in BEST also influenced youth-serving organizations to improve their supports to staff. BEST-participating organizations strengthened their professional development supports through staff mentoring, constructive feedback from supervisors, and funding for attendance at conferences, workshops, and seminars. All of these supports increased after participation in BEST. Finally, BEST trainings also fostered greater collaboration and networking among youth organizations and an increased commitment to align policies and practices to support a youth development approach. Post-training survey data showed that BEST youth workers who received

higher salaries as well as organizational support for professional development were likely to stay in the field longer (Johnson, 2002).

Finally, in an evaluation of APEX (Achieving Program Excellence), an OST college-level certificate program in Massachusetts, many participants reported the program helped them increase their knowledge and communication skills in such important areas as curriculum development, health and safety issues, diversity, and engaging children and staff. Furthermore, students reported that participation in the APEX program not only increased their understanding of out-of-school time concepts, but it enabled them to improve the programs where they work and simultaneously advance their careers. Upon completion of the APEX program, 43 percent of students reported receiving a salary increase and 33 percent were promoted within their organizations (Breslin, Gredler and Lindamood, 2000).

Improved Collaborations with Higher Education Institutions

In a 1999 survey states were asked to identify barriers to school-age care credentialing. Respondents identified a lack of college interest to work with professional development efforts as the major obstacle, next to funding (Nilsen, 1999). Since then, states have had varying success linking ECE/OST professional development programs with higher education. Professional credentials in the ECE and OST fields have had direct and indirect impacts on higher education institutions, including increasing levels of workers' participation in college-level coursework and pursuit of degrees.

Some credential programs, like the Family Development Credential (FDC) and the T.E.A.C.H.® scholarships, are overtly linked to higher education. T.E.A.C.H.® scholarships are designed for the specific purpose of pursuing a credential (like the CDA) or a college degree. The tremendous success of T.E.A.C.H.® has helped to build a better professional education system for all early childhood providers. Currently, more than 400 education institutions are partnering with T.E.A.C.H.®. The FDC requires 110 hours of training over one year, 45 hours of which must be college-level courses (seven semester hours). The following credentials also have direct links to higher education: Connecticut Credential in After School Education, Florida School Age Certification Program, Indiana Youth Development Associate, Michigan School-Age Credential Assessment System, Missouri Youth Development Credential, New York State School Age Credential, and South Dakota School-Age Credential. Advancing the Field, established by the Massachusetts Department of Education in 1999, was explicitly designed to engage institutions of higher education in the development and implementation of an early care and education training system and was instrumental in supporting the creation of school-age credential programs at many of Massachusetts' community colleges.

The higher education community prides itself in being responsive to market demands. Institutions of higher education increase course offerings as various fields demand more educated workers, and they expand non-traditional support services when adult learners require them. This was demonstrated recently by a survey of the higher education community in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Capacity Study (2006) uncovered 127 college credentials or degrees in ECE and 24 credentials or degrees in the OST field in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts OST credential and degree programs enroll 526 students annually, with 116 graduates per year, the vast majority (68 percent) of them staying in the OST field. Higher

education programs in Massachusetts have designed curriculums that are responsive to the core competencies required for successful work in the ECE and youth fields. Despite these advancements, this study also reported that colleges are struggling to keep the credentials and degree programs running due to lack of enrollment. For example, 33 percent of OST certificate and associate degree programs and 18 percent of OST bachelor degree programs reported lack of student interest as a challenge. These programs cited that a major barrier to enrollment was the poor working conditions and/or wages in the ECE and OST field (reported by 11 percent of certificate and associate degree programs and 27 percent of B.A. OST programs). The higher education community repeatedly responded that if the demand for courses exists they will continue to offer and expand their courses (Marshall, 2005).

Creating a market for an OST credential poses several challenges for higher education. First, there needs to be a steady and continuous demand for accessible and affordable college courses from youth workers. Next, the OST field for the most part employs adults, who often have additional barriers to participating in higher education that traditionally aged (18- to 21-year-old) students do not have. Lastly, out-of-school time programs cross over a number of dimensions, including the program provider (school-based, community-based, etc.), age span served, purpose/mission of programs, and knowledge base; thus, preparation for work in the field must include study in a variety of disciplines. For a broad-based field such as OST, an interdisciplinary, interdepartmental approach may be warranted. In *Twelve Key Elements for Higher Education Training: A Conceptual Framework for the Field of School Age Care* (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 1997) Esposito and Costley describe the need for “vertical integration” whereby connections are made across age range and discipline to address the problem of fragmented training and preparation. These approaches may benefit the field in many ways, including opening doors for practitioners to combine part-time positions in related fields to create full-time employment and to access multiple career pathways within the field.

Many colleges are experienced in serving adult learners, who are often described as older students, currently working and/or juggling family and work responsibilities. Survey respondents of the Massachusetts Capacity Study (2006) reported many programs and services available to support adult learners in the field, including evening, weekend, off-site and on-line courses, as well as financial aid and academic supports. College courses associated with credentials (as opposed to degrees) are often geared specifically to the adult learner who, for the most part, is already working in the field. The Indiana Youth Development Credential, for example, utilizes a variety of interactive teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles and opportunities for reflection through journaling, group work, and discussion. In order to ensure success for youth workers undertaking the credentialing program, preparatory courses should be offered. The APEX and Advancing the Field programs in Massachusetts developed noncredit introductory courses that included study skills, literacy, and basic math skills. Additional academic, financial, and programmatic supports also may be necessary so youth workers are able to access higher education opportunities successfully. Some professional development systems and credentials have undertaken such innovations as collaborations with urban community colleges, off-campus courses, award of credit for experiential and prior independent learning, advising supports, and credit-bearing training; the resulting credential certifies successful completion of a combination of traditional coursework and other types of training and experience.

Higher education support of a credential also enhances its legitimacy and often provides the necessary link to financial aid for students. State scholarships for students enrolled in matriculating degree programs will potentially stimulate the use of the credential, if it is tied to college credit and connected to associate or other degrees. Articulation issues, which relate to the connections among credential and various degree programs and the transferability of credits across programs, are also important to consider and necessitate the involvement of the higher education community at the beginning of the planning process. Articulation also involves the awarding of credit for prior practical learning, work experience, and formal education in working toward a credential or degree program. The Massachusetts Board of Education has sponsored an Early Childhood Transfer Compact, which facilitates the transfer of credits from community colleges to public four-year colleges preparing students for early childhood teaching positions. All community colleges and public four-year colleges in Massachusetts have signed onto this agreement. The Massachusetts Early Childhood Transfer Compact study bodes well for the YDA credential program to develop similar higher education collaboration.

Public Policy Implications of Credentials

Credentialing as a strategy to improve workforce conditions for youth workers and providers in the after-school and school-age care field may prove to be more effective if embedded in state or local policies and accompanied by incentives that support increased training, compensation, and career advancement. Research suggests that the positive benefits of youth development credentialing can be significant, particularly in terms of forming workers' identities as professionals. While there are challenging issues to be addressed in establishing accessible and affordable certification programs, the largely positive experiences of those who have been credentialed can help shape and inform policy objectives for future professionalizing of the OST field. Increasingly, states are creating a number of policy initiatives that are noteworthy in their support for inclusion of OST in professional development planning and programming.

In many states, licensing regulations have been updated to encourage and/or require higher education and ongoing training. Licensing requirements have recognized school-age care (SAC) credentials as a staff qualification equivalency in a growing number of states. This encouraging development gives the youth development associate credential the potential to be written into state legislation as the child development associate credential has been—offering recognition and legitimacy to the certification.

In Massachusetts, for example, legislation was passed in 2005 mandating a professional development system for early care and school-age care professionals. The state reorganized and launched a new Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and funded an Afterschool Commission designated to make recommendations on school-age care and youth programming to the commissioner of EEC and the Massachusetts legislature. The creation of this system provides an important and timely opportunity to tie the YDA credential to the state's efforts to professionalize and improve the workforce conditions of not only early childhood providers but youth workers as well.

In 2005, Florida adopted the Florida School-Age Certification training program into the Florida Administrative Code. The program promotes quality services in youth settings by establishing required standards, training, and evaluation for staff members and providers. This program

provides school-age professionals with a training option that allows them to obtain additional levels of certification once the first level is achieved. Furthermore, completion of the Florida School-Age Certification training program may be used to meet the staff credential required for the director credential.

Several states have also instituted programs to offer incentives that support increased training, compensation, and advancement for youth workers, such as loan forgiveness programs and state-funded scholarships that count toward competency-based training and college degree programs. Such state policies that provide incentives or requirements for credentialing include improved licensing regulations, tiered reimbursement rates, incentives for increased trainings, and scholarships, among others. Tiered reimbursement and quality rating systems offer a higher state-based pay rate for programs accredited through National Afterschool Association (NAA) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) that serve low-income children and hire credentialed staff (see the case studies for a full description). Many tiered reimbursement systems also offer cash stipends or merit pay rewards to individuals who earn credentials.

SECTION III: THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CREDENTIALING: LESSONS FROM THE EXPERTS

This section summarizes the lessons learned from over 20 interviews with experts from the fields of early childhood education, teacher education, youth work, and after-school education. Many of the opinions cited in this report echo and support the findings from our literature review, but they revealed additional considerations that were not explored or identified yet in the research. The summary points below both reinforce and complement the earlier sections of this report and provide a more complete understanding of the impact of, potential for, and challenges ahead of us in developing the YDA Credential.

The Investment IS Worth It

Regarding quality programming and services, interviewees cited ample evidence from the OST and ECE fields that a highly educated workforce provides higher quality services to children and youth. Staff with more qualifications—including entry-level credentials—have a positive impact on child and youth outcomes. Such resounding evidence from related fields makes it seem all the more logical to invest in the professional development of youth workers in the out-of-school time field. However, there are other compelling reasons to invest in the credential. Many experts view a credential as one of the first formal steps toward acquiring the body of knowledge required in the after-school field. They suggest credentialed staff tend to stay longer in their jobs and take on increased responsibilities over time. Given the staff turnover problem the field is experiencing and the costs associated with recruitment and re-training a transient workforce, our experts believe that support for credentialing is a wise financial investment.

Credentials Matter Most When Tied to Public Policy

Informants resoundingly affirmed that credentials matter. This response was qualified with another unanimous response, “but only if the credential is tied to wage incentives and other policies that reward and/or require it.” The impact of the STAR Quality Rating Scales, for example, has demonstrated that credentials can and do matter when used as a policy tool to achieve higher revenue for programs and individuals (see Appendix A, page 38). Legislative initiatives, such the establishment of a professional development system in Massachusetts, can also act as a stimulus for the credential when tied to a requirement for staff of licensed programs.

Interviewees cited a number of state and local policies that could set the stage for successful implementation of credentialing. Recommendations also included (1) enlist all the stakeholders in the process; (2) recognize the power and limitations of government involvement and look to the private sector also to participate; (3) engage the youth worker personally and professionally; (4) research and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the credential; and (5) merge higher education and training with credentialing.

The Child Development Associate Credential saw dramatic increase in participation when Head Start (a federally administered child-care and family development program) included the CDA Credential in its updated education and training requirements for Head Start teaching staff, thus demonstrating the powerful impact that public policy can have on credentials.

Fund the Full Infrastructure

Credentials alone cannot solve the workforce crisis in youth work. Credentials hold an important place as a tool to increase status and recognition for the worker, but they have limitations as a single strategy. A handful of states enthusiastically embraced the school-age credential (SAC) modeled after the Army School-Age Credential. Yet unlike the military, many states struggled to create credentialing infrastructures or systems that translated into permanent and stable supports for OST workers.

Those administering credentials need to insist on connecting credentials to career advancement and compensation issues. Credentials will be most successful and effective when they are part of a comprehensive professional development system, a system that includes

- **Core Competencies** that define what staff need to know and do to work effectively with children and youth
- **A Training System** that is grounded in the core competencies and is responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce
- **A Training and Trainer Approval System** that ensures the quality of both the content and delivery of training
- **A Professional Registry** that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field
- **Career Lattice and Pathways** that link roles, responsibilities, and salary ranges

It is important to highlight, however, that there are many starting points and a variety of strategies that can be employed to build a widespread and successful infrastructure. Credential development is one channel towards the building of a more comprehensive professional system. For example, a collaboration known as Achieve Boston has developed a set of core competencies and implemented a training system for youth workers as the first step of a professional development infrastructure and as stepping stones toward the pilot implementation of the YDA credential. (For more information about Achieve Boston and the YDA, see Appendix A.)

Lessons from the SAC and CDA credentialing experiences have convinced a number of experts we talked with that pursuing a credential for youth workers is worthwhile and will be successful when paired with the necessary infrastructure and supports. For example, pursuing the credential with a cohort of peers has been found to have a positive impact on job satisfaction and retention. The teamwork, collegiality, and support the students receive from each other are invaluable. For a field with employees who primarily identify with the agencies for which they work, the pursuit of a credential that spans settings, ages, and auspices will provide a step toward further developing the out-of-school time field.

Financial support also has been found to be extremely important, but scholarships cannot sustain the system of credentialing alone. Additional resources are needed, such as career advising, mentoring, tracking of the candidates' education and college credits, and working with higher education and training organizations. It was noted in our interviews with faculty from colleges and universities that courses in youth work were often under-enrolled and consequently discontinued due to lack of participation. A highly relational marketing, recruitment, and advising strategy that supports adult learners pursuing these credentials was suggested. Successful strategy approaches for recruitment include going directly to the programs to discuss

the credential with potential participants, waiving pre-requisites until the student is enrolled, direct calling, sending faxes with the latest course offerings, open house opportunities, offering open enrollment, providing courses in languages other than English, and scheduling courses that do not compete with work hours.

It's Not Just About Wages

Lessons from the education field have taught us that it takes more than just improving wages to turn a job into a career. Providing employee benefits (health care, vacation, retirement, etc.) is equally as important as wages. For example, the creation of TIAA-CREF allowed teachers access to health, life insurance, and retirement benefits for themselves and their families.¹ In the OST field it will also be important to create full-time opportunities for those who want them. Other incentives discussed in the interviews included tying education requirements to wage incentives and supporting workers financially through scholarships and/or loan forgiveness and otherwise (such as, time-off to attend training, support services—such as, cohort models, mentoring, career advising, remedial skill development) and recognition for their efforts in their pursuit of higher education.

A National Strategy and Framework will Guide the States

Where the YDA credential will be administered is still open to debate and remains somewhat controversial. The debate centers on whether to nationalize and centralize the credential or to encourage the states to administer it themselves. While there seems to be no clear consensus on where to “house” the YDA credential, what did emerge from our interviews was a general agreement that a national strategy is needed to set the direction and establish a framework for interested states to adopt and adapt in different ways. The framework will include the core competencies, suggested course sequence and curricula, training requirements, assessment protocols, and policy recommendations for administering the credential at the state level. For those states uninterested or unable to administer the credential, a national body, similar to the Council for Professional Recognition, could award the credential to individuals residing in excluded states.

While there is no definitive answer to this question, it may require a state-by-state approach. In some states, it may be preferable to house the credential in a neutral body to which school-age care providers, youth workers, public health workers, and after-school educators could equally apply. Conversely, if the credential were only administered through the department of early care and education or education, youth workers might not see it as relevant to their work. History has taught us that by focusing on only one sector of the out-of-school time field one can only expect a limited response. The market potential of the YDA credential is vast, and it would therefore be in the best interest of after-school providers and the programs they serve to address all of the multiple layers the OST field.

¹ Information on the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund, an 85-year-old financial services provider to those working in academic, medical, cultural, and research fields, is available at www.tiaa-cref.org.

The Role of Employers

A number of interviewees indicated that a major barrier to increasing the utilization of the YDA credential is the resistance of some employers to support their employees through the process. Adequate release time for attending classes, paying for books, or agreeing to pay the individual a higher salary upon successful completion of the credential often were cited as major barriers to participation and/or support. Understandably this resistance is a reflection of how under-resourced the OST field has been and its financial inability to shoulder the costs of professionalizing the field without additional support.

Employers' attitudes about credentialing play an important role in the success of the YDA credential. When an employer is accommodating to a candidate's pursuit of credentials and higher education, the employer becomes a partner in the process and fully participates by motivating staff, supervising them, and tying their performance reviews and salary scales to earning the credential. In terms of recruitment, supportive employer's value, and even demand, well-educated employees and are willing to pay accordingly for credentialed staff.

SECTION IV: SUMMARY – FULLFILLING THE PROMISE OF CREDENTIALS

Conclusions

Clearly credentialing and training programs are popular in the out-of-school time and early childhood fields. Credentials not only provide an opportunity for adults working with children and youth to gain professional recognition for demonstrating competence on the job, but they also offer the opportunity to increase program quality and positive outcomes for youth. Thousands of workers nationwide seek additional training and credentials each year as professional development systems and supports continue to grow.

This review has documented that credentials are a powerful strategy for improving services to children and youth and for professionalizing the OST workforce. Through a thorough literature review and interviews with experts we have identified many promising results of credential programs. It has been demonstrated that credentials in the ECE and OST fields can

- Increase workers' sense of worth, efficacy, competence, and feelings of professionalism (self-reported and reported by supervisors)
- Increase workers' knowledge and skills
- Increase workers' salaries
- Reduce turnover rates
- Encourage workers' ongoing pursuit of professional development and higher education
- Activate the market for increased college-level course offerings in the field
- Encourage employer support for future training and education
- Inspire increased emphasis on staff education and workplace supports in state licensing regulations and state and national public policy
- Most importantly, lead to higher quality services to children, youth, and families and greatly increase the potential for more positive child and youth development outcomes

However, our field experts caution that credentialing alone is still not enough to professionalize and resolve all of the challenges of the diverse and vast OST field. The Youth Development Associate Credential is seen as a lynchpin of a comprehensive professional development system that coordinates all of the pieces into an articulated system that recognizes and rewards staff competence and achievements. The YDA credential is designed to be part of a continuum of professional development opportunities that aligns various career pathways. National researchers and advocates support a well-designed and articulated professional development system as having each of the following interrelated components:

- Core Competencies that define what staff need to know and do to work effectively with children and youth
- A Training System that is grounded in the core competencies and is responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce
- A Training and Trainer Approval System that ensures the quality of both the content and delivery of training
- A Professional Registry that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field
- Career Lattice and Pathways that link roles, responsibilities, and salary ranges

This review has demonstrated that credentials can offer a support to school-age and youth workers who are committed to their chosen field. If given the opportunity to access training and

education and advance their careers, frontline workers will be better equipped to “make a career” in this vital industry. If the field can support them in this pursuit by providing healthy work environments with adequate salaries and benefits, OST workers will be able to provide quality care and services to youth while still being able to provide for their own families.

Future Research

While this report does set the stage for continued support of the Youth Development Associate and professional credentials, it also raises other research questions that will need to be addressed in the near future.

1. **We recommend continued process and outcome evaluations of credential initiatives and professional development systems.** Early research on the impact of credentials indicates they offer promising results as both a quality improvement and workforce support strategy. Further, the pilot implementation of the YDA credential in Boston offers a unique opportunity for ongoing research from this credential’s earliest stage. However, as noted, these early findings are based on the limited information currently available. In conducting this study, NIOST was surprised to find only one formal comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the school-age credential, conducted by Cornell University. Additional formative and summative evaluations of school-age and youth worker credential programs will be needed to identify the true influence and benefits these programs have in the after-school field.
2. **We recommend continued learning from programs currently underway to assist in answering unsettled question.** For example, one major question that remains unanswered is where a credential is best affiliated/administered. Credential efforts thus far have demonstrated that the location of the credential greatly impacts its acceptance and utility in the OST field. Currently, the decisions as to where to locate a credentialing system’s administration are based on funding, capacity, and desire to administer the program. However, in some cases this has led to further splintering of the OST field and exclusion of workers desiring professional development. We believe that much can be learned and shared from the efforts of current credentialing programs. With additional study, we will be able to settle the question of where the credential would best be located to maximize the utility of credentials for the full OST field.
3. **We recommend further investigation on whether a direct link can be drawn between credentials and increased positive youth outcomes.** Thus far we have been able to rely on self-reports from programs and staff that credentials have made a difference in their work. To maintain future support of credentials it will be important to document scientifically that credentials lead to improved services and more positive youth development outcomes. Through secondary analysis of existing data sets and new data collection with larger samples of participants we can determine the relationship between credentials, training, professional development, college degrees, and youth outcomes. One tool for assessing this relationship is the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO), developed in 2001 by NIOST to help after-school programs measure eight key “intermediary” youth outcomes (the attitudes, skills and behaviors) that research suggests are linked to long-term positive development and academic and life

success. SAYO has been used and proven a valid measure in the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study and in a study of 21st CCLCs by the Massachusetts Department of Education. The data collected in these studies provide a wealth of information to be explored further in relationship to workforce characteristics in order to determine if credentials are impacting the quality of services and ultimately impacting the development of more positive youth outcomes. The SAYO could also be included in future evaluations of the YDA and other credentials to ascertain the link between credentials and youth outcomes.

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APPENDIX A: SELECTED CASE STUDIES

This appendix includes selected case studies of credential programs. This catalog is in no way intended to be a full list of all credentials available, but it provides a cross section of different types of credentials and, when it is available, information on their documented effectiveness. Credentials that have national application are listed first in chronological order from their start date. This chronological listing may help demonstrate the progression of the credential and professional development movement. State-based programs are listed second in alphabetical order.

Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

One prominent and notable effort of credentialing, which successfully stimulated the professional development of the early care and education workforce, is the Child Development Associate Credential. The CDA is a nationally recognized professional credential for people directly caring for and teaching young children. CDA credentials are issued by the Council for Professional Recognition, a national association. Since 1975, more than 160,000 U.S. child-care workers have attained the credential. Ten thousand providers seek a CDA credential annually. Forty-six states and Washington, DC, have incorporated the CDA credential into their early care and education licensing regulations.

The CDA is a performance-based credential certifying that a child-care worker is able to meet the specific needs of children and collaborates with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth using child development frameworks. The CDA credential defines 6 goals and 13 functional areas (i.e., core competencies), which center on child development, safety, professionalism, appropriateness of the environment, and strengthening ties to the family. Candidates must be 18 years old or older, have earned a high school diploma or a GED, and have 480 hours experience working with children within the past 5 years. In addition, candidates must document 120 hours of formal child-care education. Education/training can include in-field or in-service training and/or courses at a community/technical college or a four-year college/university. CDA credential costs vary from \$350 to \$1,500. Financial aid is available and many (60 percent) CDA recipients report that their employers helped to defray costs. Having met the education and experience prerequisites, candidates embark upon an assessment process that includes (1) a written exam; (2) an oral interview; (3) an observation of the candidate working with children conducted by a council advisor; (4) completed parent questionnaires; and (5) a review of the candidate's portfolio of professional resources and demonstrated competencies.

The CDA credential has served as a professional pathway especially for minority women. Forty-five to forty-eight percent of CDA holders are minority women. Over 90 percent of CDA recipients were 26 years or older at the time of credentialing; in other words, they were adult learners. The CDA also has been shown to be an important entry point into higher education for many participants. Despite the stipulation that education need not be credit-bearing, 45 percent of CDA participants receive college credit, most ranging between 3 and 12 credits (Bailey, 2004).

The Council for Professional Recognition has documented improvements in child-care services provided by CDA educated practitioners, and the CDA also has been shown to influence improved working conditions. The CDA credential appears to have successfully fostered

workers' professional self-perception and even provided professional advancement for some. The CDA process yields positive personal gains for the individual through increased morale and motivation on the job. Workers testify to increased confidence, achievement, and efficacy. CDA recipients have demonstrated a remarkably high retention rate. In 1983, 86 percent of CDAs reported that they were still in the child-care field; in 1988 96 percent and in 1994 99.4 percent were still in the field. In 1999, a longitudinal comparison found that even among the veteran group almost 77 percent were still in the field a full 10 years after credentialing. Thirty-two percent of all CDA survey respondents reported receiving a promotion upon earning the credential. Unfortunately wages and/or wage increases have not always followed. In 1994, 60 percent of CDAs reported receiving a pay raise after receiving the credential; these raises were often very modest, if not paltry. However, the 2004 National Survey found significant increases in the annual salaries of CDA recipients from the time of award to the survey (Bailey, 2004).

In terms of ongoing professional development, approximately 32 percent of the respondents report that they have been awarded college credit toward a degree for having a CDA credential, an increase from 22 percent in 1999. Further, CDA recipients often are active in professional early care and education associations; approximately 63 percent of CDAs belong to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and 41 percent belong to the National Head Start Association (Bailey, 2004).

U.S. Military Child Care Act (MCCA)

The U.S. military also implemented a successful credentialing program to overhaul its child-care and youth development system. In 1989, the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) was enacted to improve the quality of child-care services. The U.S. Armed Services runs the largest employer-sponsored child-care program in the country, providing high-quality, affordable services to over 200,000 children daily in over 300 locations world-wide in child development centers, family child-care homes, and before- and after-school programs. Ninety-five percent of all military child-care centers are now accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (compared to 8 percent of non-military centers nationwide) (Duff Campbell, 2000).

A critical element of the MCCA is the competency-based training program it created in which skills must be demonstrated and pay raises are directly linked to increased training. The MCCA also created the Army School Age Credential, instilling a sense of professionalism among providers. The MCCA training and credentialing program requires satisfactory completion of the training program as a condition of employment. Training is competency based, and skills must be demonstrated in the child-care setting. The training follows the functional areas of the CDA credential and includes orientation, core competency, and annual training requirements.

Military child-care staff are required to complete orientation training before working with children. Orientation training involves six to eight hours of training covering topics such as first aid, health and sanitation, child abuse identification, reporting and prevention, child guidance techniques, age-appropriate activities, and parent and family relations. Following orientation training, core competency training requires caregivers to complete 15 training modules within two years of being hired. The core competency training follows the CDA credential program. Caregivers can work at their own pace, and training takes place in small groups, classroom demonstrations, and one-on-one settings. School-age care staff must complete 36 hours of

training based on competency modules within the first year of work. All caregivers are also required to complete 24 hours of ongoing training each year.

Salary increases are mandated to be tied to completion of training milestones, linking higher pay to higher quality and more stable staff. And both part- and full-time employees receive life and health insurance, a retirement plan, vacation and sick leave, and paid federal holidays.

The MCCA experience proves that the quality of child-care can be improved by focusing on establishing and enforcing comprehensive standards, assisting providers in becoming accredited, and enhancing provider compensation and training. A RAND study of the MCCA found that the military's wage policy had a number of positive effects on staff quality and helped achieve the goals of a better-trained and more stable workforce. RAND confirmed that wages increased from pre-MCCA levels. The wage program provided a strong incentive for staff to complete the training and essentially "weeded out" less motivated caregivers. Turnover decreased from over 300 percent pre-MCCA to below 30 percent after the implementation; and 95 percent of program managers reported some or significant improvements in the quality of care and services being provided (Duff Campbell, 2000).

Recent and promising information from the Department of the Army Child and Youth Services Directorate indicates that there are plans underway to incorporate the Military School Age Credential as part of a new Youth Development Associate Credential. The broad-based YDA credential will encompass two specialties. One is focused on school-age children, and the other is focused on middle school and teen age youth. Staff may focus on one or both of these areas, allowing for a variety of employment options within the military child and youth programs (Pratt, 2006).

T.E.A.C.H.® and WAGE\$

Two additional models from the early care and education field that have been very successful at increasing practitioners' education and compensation levels are T.E.A.C.H.® and WAGE\$.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project is one of the most respected and influential professional development models currently available. Founded in 1990, it offers educational opportunities to directors, teachers, and family child-care providers. T.E.A.C.H.® has grown in the last decade from a small pilot project serving 21 teachers in North Carolina to a national movement. T.E.A.C.H.® is in place in 23 states, and has been successful in improving the education, compensation, and retention of the early childhood workforce. For example, in 2001-2002,

- Over 4,300 teachers, directors, and family child-care providers received T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project scholarships.
- Thirty-two percent of North Carolina's child-care centers had at least one participant on scholarship.
- Over 3,000 of those scholarships supported child-care professionals taking courses leading to an associate's degree in early childhood education.
- Teachers participating in the associate's degree scholarship program completed an average of 14 semester hours per contract, saw their compensation improve by over 13 percent annually, and left their child-care centers at a rate of less than 9 percent per year (Child Care Services Association, 2002).

The T.E.A.C.H.® programs typically are restricted to providers who work a minimum of 30 hours per week; therefore, in essence, the program is inaccessible to the majority of school-age care and OST providers due to the part-time nature of the OST work. The T.E.A.C.H.® program is available to school-age care providers in only seven states, where the states have made exceptions to include school-age care staff.

T.E.A.C.H.® is founded on the principles of partnership, diversity, use of existing systems, and collaboration. T.E.A.C.H.® is composed of four components:

- Educational Scholarships – support for tuition and books, a travel stipend, and often the provision of release time
- Formal Education – a set amount of college coursework leading to a credentialed degree
- Compensation – an incentive in the form of a raise or bonus and
- Commitment – a commitment to remain in the sponsoring child-care program or the field for a specified period of time

During the fiscal year 2000-2001, all T.E.A.C.H.® programs awarded more than 13,000 scholarships to teachers of young children in 6,861 sponsoring early childhood education programs throughout the country. Through these scholarships 56,122 hours of college credit were completed toward degrees in early childhood education. Participating teachers have seen their annual earnings increase by an average of 3 to 21 percent nationally. And, on average, the turnover rate for T.E.A.C.H.® participants nationwide is less than 10 percent annually (<http://www.childcareservices.org/teach/project.html>, 2005).

The success of T.E.A.C.H.® has helped to build a better professional education system for all early childhood providers. As the availability of scholarships has increased and more and more child-care providers are given the opportunity to attend college, demand for more relevant coursework and more flexible education has increased. Colleges and universities are addressing this demand by increasing their course offerings and by offering courses at night, on weekends, and in more convenient locations. More than 400 education institutions are partnering with T.E.A.C.H.®.

The Child Care WAGE\$ Project builds on and collaborates with T.E.A.C.H.®. Whereas T.E.A.C.H.® rewards child-care professionals seeking more education and helps them attain it, WAGE\$ rewards those who have already attained education and helps keep them in their child-care programs. WAGE\$, introduced in 1994, provides salary supplements to underpaid teachers, directors, and family child-care providers. The project is designed to provide preschool-age children more stable relationships with better-educated teachers by rewarding teacher education and continuity of care. Salary supplements are tied to the educational attainment and length of time a participant remains in a child-care program. In addition, these supplements are paid directly to participants and, therefore, do not impact the child-care program's budget. Because funding for WAGE\$ comes from external sources and goes directly to individual staff members, families benefit from a better educated, more consistent staff without having to pay more. (WAGE\$ is funded in North Carolina by state Smart Start funds.)

Eligibility for WAGE\$ is based on current employee wages and work history. Early care and education teachers or family child-care providers earning less than \$14.60 per hour or a director

earning less than \$15.00 per hour may be eligible for a salary supplement if they work in a participating North Carolina county with Smart Start funding. Participants must work with children age 0 to 5 years at least 10 hours per week in a licensed child-care setting and must have a formal child-care credential or education beyond a high school diploma. Supplements are received by check after a six-month work commitment period (documented work in the same child-care setting for six months).

More than 8,100 providers in North Carolina received a WAGE\$ supplement during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Wage supplements range from \$200 - \$6,250 annually for teachers, assistant teachers, and family child-care providers. Participants can increase their supplement amounts by gaining more education. The average annual supplement was \$1,148 per participant. During the 2004-2005 program year statewide, North Carolina had a turnover rate of 24 percent; WAGE\$ participant turnover was 16 percent. Also 29 percent of active WAGE\$ participants completed additional coursework, and 18 percent reached a higher wage supplement level (Child Care Services Association, 2005).

Family Development Credential

Started in 1996 and utilizing Cornell University's Empowering Families Project curriculum, the Family Development Credential is designed for family support staff, home visitors, social welfare community action workers, teachers, case managers, Early Head Start and Head Start staff, youth workers, police community health workers, probation officers, TANF case managers, and child protection services workers. The FDC requires 110 hours of training over one year (45 hours of college-level courses or seven semester hours), 55 hours of supervised field experience, 100 hours of supervised competency-based field experience, a written examination, and a portfolio.

Like T.E.A.C.H.®, the FDC program has been adopted by local administering agencies and is replicated in 18 states across the country (including, Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Washington).

The New York Youth Development Certificate, for example, utilizes the FDC curriculum and includes five courses at City University and 12 college credits. Cornell has documented that by earning the FDC, frontline family support workers develop more effective skills in helping families, while at the same time reducing stress and promoting well being in their own lives. An evaluation of the New York YDC found increased self-esteem, confidence, and assertiveness in helping families, as well as in setting workers' own goals for higher education and career planning. Participants also reported increased skills in communication and building relationships with clients, co-workers, and supervisors, and in their personal lives, and increased knowledge and use of empowerment-based family support skills in working with families. Supervisors of these workers also reported higher staff morale and lower turnover (Mosley and Smith, 2004).

A 2004 Preliminary Evaluation of the Missouri Family Development Training and Credentialing Program reports similar findings to the New York study. The Missouri evaluation consisted of small focus groups and pre- and post- program surveys with participants and a control group. Participants reported a new ability to set professional and appropriate limits with clients; increased organizational skills and ability to be focused in their work; increased communication

skills with clients, co-workers, and supervisors; and a new feeling of respect from co-workers, supervisors, and colleagues. Compared to the control group, FDC participants were significantly more likely to report greater increase in global self-esteem and greater sense of job mastery. Mosley and Smith did not, however, find a significant difference in job turnover rates or job satisfaction; most likely this lack of effect is due to the short length of time between pre- and post-surveys (6-9 months) (Mosley and Smith, 2004).

Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers - BEST

The National Training Institute for Community Youth Work (NTI) launched the BEST network (Building Exemplary Systems for Training Youth Workers) in 1997. Since then, more than 5,000 youth workers have participated in BEST training, more than 1,200 participants in the year 2000 alone. BEST was one of the first national efforts to build local systems of training, education, and certification specifically for youth development workers. While NTI started with seven communities, it now supports a total of 23 local and 3 regional systems for youth worker professional development. The initiative is based on the *Advancing Youth Development: A Curriculum for Training Youth Workers* (AYD) curriculum and provides technical assistance, training, and networking to community-based systems as they train youth workers in the concepts of youth development.

The MidWest BEST, for example, provides opportunities for youth workers in 10 communities throughout Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. The Youth Development Worker Certificate, a component of the BEST initiative, is a 12-college-credit-hour certificate awarded by the Human Services Department of the Metropolitan Community Colleges (4 colleges in 9 locations in the Kansas City, Missouri, area). Completion of the certification program can lead to an Associate of Arts degree with an emphasis in Human Services.

In a 2002 evaluation of the BEST programs the Academy for Educational Development (AED) found the majority of BEST participants had at least some college experience or a college degree; one-quarter of participants had less than one year of youth work experience, whereas nearly half had five or more years experience. More than half of the participants had been at their current position for less than one year at the time of the pre-training survey (Johnson, 2002).

BEST participants acknowledged and demonstrated increased awareness, competence, and efficacy in their jobs as youth workers after completing the BEST training. NTI learned from pre-and post-training surveys that 75 percent of BEST graduates found that the training helped them increase youth involvement in program development and shift from an adult-centered orientation to a youth-centered perspective. Graduates' supervisors reported that the training helped youth development workers value activities that contribute to youth outcomes. Overwhelmingly, youth workers agreed that courses, certificates, and degrees increased the professional status of youth work (Johnson, 2002).

Participation in BEST also influenced youth-serving organizations to improve their supports to staff. BEST-participating organizations strengthened their system of support for the professional development of youth workers through staff mentoring, constructive feedback from supervisors, more release time, and funding for attendance at conferences, workshops, and seminars. All of these supports increased after participation in BEST. Survey data also showed that youth workers who received higher salaries as well as support for professional development from their

supervisor and organization were more likely to remain in the field longer (Johnson, 2002). BEST training also fostered greater collaboration and networking among youth organizations and an increased commitment to align policies and practices to support a youth development approach.

The BEST evaluation demonstrates that the BEST initiative is effective both as a strategy and a model for building a system of professional development services and supports for youth workers. BEST promotes a common philosophy, language, and nationally recognized curriculum. Professional development is a critical element of the youth-serving sector's infrastructure for maintaining quality staff and programs. Professional development must be continuous and provide a range of opportunities to increase youth workers' knowledge of youth development and skill in providing programming for youth.

Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program

Enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 launched a range of new and innovative opportunities for the youth workforce development system. The WIA created a national vision to invest in young people and youth programming by offering quality youth worker training and job-related resources to improve program quality and standards. The Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship (YDPA), led by the Department of Labor, targets frontline youth workers who deliver comprehensive services to youth. In addition to on-site training, the YDPA initiative provides related instruction, mentoring opportunities, a career path, and national recognition with the goal to improve program quality and support increased retention for both youth workers and the programs where they are employed.

The National 4-H Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Certificate Program, one of DOL pilot programs funded through grants to national organizations, began in the fall of 2002. The pilot consisted of 13 pairs of master practitioners and practitioner apprentices from across the United States. The Department of Labor has approved the National 4-H standards, making the apprenticeship program all the more appealing and valuable a choice to youth workers who want to strengthen their skills and improve their service delivery methods. Apprenticeships typically take 2 to 3 years to complete based on an average of 3 hours of instruction and 40 hours of on-the-job learning per week.

In 2003, Montana State University conducted an evaluation of the 4-H YDPA to assess the structure and implementation of the project. Practitioner apprentices were surveyed to measure their youth development skills and job satisfaction. Evaluation results show that those participating in the 4-H YDPA learned such valuable skills as time and resource management, the ability to handle stress and criticism, and skills to work with teens. Practitioners reported great progress in their ability to understand youth development, collaborate with colleagues, incorporate strategic planning, and conduct leadership training. The strongest theme uncovered through the evaluation was that practitioner apprentices had gained more confidence and ability to do their jobs, had greater interest and enthusiasm in their jobs, and displayed a considerable amount of excitement and eagerness for youth development work (Deen & Bailey, 2005).

North American Certification Project

In 1999, three organizations (the International Leadership Coalition for Professional Child and Youth Care Work, the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, and the Council of

Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations) united to launch a broad effort to define standards of practice and credentialing for the profession of child and youth care in North America—forming the North American Certification Project (NACP). They outlined three goals: (1) the identification of core competencies (defined as professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes) for the field; (2) the determination of the educational, ethical, and other requirements for entry into the field; and (3) the establishment of a national certification system for child and youth care workers in North America.

The NACP is not age- or location-specific as other credentials tend to be. The NACP focuses on practitioners working with infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, within the context of the family and the community and across the life span. Practitioners promote optimal development of children, youth, and families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development, parent education, family support, school-based, community mental health, group homes, residential treatment, early intervention, home-based care and treatment, psychiatric, rehabilitation, pediatric health care, and juvenile justice programs and centers.

The NACP is still under development. Eventually three levels of certification will be considered: entry level, first professional level, and advanced level. Current work has focused on the first professional level (requiring a bachelor's degree). The objective of the NACP is to set credentialing standards for North America; however, it is important to recognize that there are significant differences between the U.S. and Canadian educational systems, and, therefore, education requirements will be different. The remainder of this summary focuses on the U.S. requirements only. NACP requirements for the first professional level include a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university OR five or more years of documented work experience in the field for a 10-year grandfathering period.

To date the NACP has conducted an extensive meta-analysis of existing lists of competencies for child and youth workers and in 2001 published the NACP Core Competencies. NACP core competencies focus on professionalism; cultural and human diversity; applied human development; and relationships and communication. NACP also emphasizes developmental practice methods within the context of the core competencies and a code of ethics for standards of practice. NACP core competencies are completed and published. NACP Certification is being piloted currently. A national exam including 100+ items has been drafted. Piloting and validating the exam is underway and will continue until the exam has been administered to approximately 500 practitioners. Following pilot testing and validation assessment, the exam and certification process will be re-evaluated, revised, and then made available nationally. It is expected to be available in the spring of 2006.

Tiered Reimbursement Approaches

Many states have implemented tiered reimbursement as a quality improvement and staff development strategy. Tiered reimbursement and quality rating systems offer a higher state-based pay rate for programs accredited through the National Afterschool Association (NAA) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) that serve low-income children and/or hire credentialed staff.

Tiered reimbursement programs can offer a supportive career development system that promotes quality program improvement, recruitment and retention, and financial incentives plus recognition in the child-care field. While variation exists across the states, programs are typically a four-tiered system based on educational or training achievement of quality performance standards. Scholarships are often available; however, funding and availability are often limited.

In Idaho, the STARS system, (State Training and Registry System) offers many benefits to child-care workers, including cash incentives, scholarships, mentorship, and career advancement. For example, once an individual is enrolled in the STARS program, she is instructed to start attending IdahoSTARS-approved training or college courses. As a practitioner accumulates more education, training, and experience she is able to apply for “career pathway level move.” The first level requires a participant to hold a high school diploma or GED and have proof of at least 15 and up to 45 hours of IdahoSTARS-approved training or 1 to 3 college credits related to the ECE field. As one moves up in levels the amount of required IdahoSTARS-approved training increases along with number of hours of ECE field experience. This process can continue to the eighth and highest level, which requires a PhD along with 36 months or 6,000 hours of experience in the ECE field. Training, education, and experience can be applied toward placement on the IdahoSTARS Career Pathway. The Idaho program offers career counseling and a comprehensive registry to track status, wages, working conditions, and employment.

In Pennsylvania, the Keystone Standards Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources and Support Program offers practitioners the opportunity to increase their capacity to provide quality child care through performance standards, financial incentives, and awards. A part-time child-care worker, whose facility meets site and staff-specific requirements and who has earned at least two STARS can earn an award of up to \$1,000.00. A provider moves through the STAR levels utilizing a self-study process based on research-based performance standards. Each STAR has its own standards that are associated with enhancing outcomes for children and families. STAR One, the first level in the Keystone STARS quality system, is relatively easy to obtain for any provider who has achieved the minimal health and safety standards required by regulations. The performance standards in each level build upon the standards in the previous level, each advance requiring additional standards. Star Four, the highest rating, is equivalent to an accreditation according to the standards developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Achieve Boston²

Achieve Boston is currently in the midst of developing a Youth Development Associate (YDA) Credential that will address OST needs in Massachusetts and serve as a national model for OST credentials. The YDA credential is modeled after the Indiana Youth Development Credential (IYD) and encompasses the following components:

- Core knowledge, training, and education
- Demonstration of skills and competence
- Review and assessment
- Support (financial, mentoring, etc.)

Achieve Boston is now finalizing a cohesive framework of specified roles, levels, and specializations appropriate to the age, stage, and setting in which the practitioner works. In

² See Acknowledgements, page 1, for more information on Achieve Boston or visit www.achievetoboston.org.

addition, Achieve Boston is defining the requirements of the YDA and the mechanisms for attaining the credential. Ongoing work with the members of the Higher Education in Afterschool and Youth Roundtable (HEAYR) has resulted in the identification of existing college courses consistent with the YDA requirements. The recruitment of a cohort of participants, college institutions, and training organizations will begin in the fall of 2006.

The Boston version of the YDA credential is based on 11 core competency areas encompassing child and youth development; activities and curriculum; building caring relationships/behavior guidance; families, schools and communities; program environment; program management; cultural competence; safety, health and nutrition; professionalism; leadership and advocacy. The credential will require a mix of college-level coursework and training, as well as experience working with children and youth in the field.

State Initiatives

In the absence of a national out-of-school time credential, several states have implemented local credentials. Below are summaries of only a few states' efforts.

Florida

In Florida the Department of Children and Families licenses child-care programs. The purpose of the program is to ensure a healthy and safe environment for the children in child-care settings and to improve the quality of their care through regulation and licensing. In Florida, providers seeking to enhance their skills are offered the Florida School Age Certification Training Program. The training program consists of 120 hours of training for school-age child-care personnel and 80 hours of training using the departmentally-approved curriculum, which focuses on six competency areas. Florida's training program offers quality training that prepares individuals for employment, enables those currently employed to upgrade job skills for career advancement, and responds to the social and educational needs of the child-care industries. This certification program focuses on teaching essential school-age skills and stresses demonstration, program management, and understanding of developmentally appropriate practices for school-age children.

All ECE and SAC program directors and administrators in Florida must have an Administrator Credential as part of the minimum licensing standard. The credentialing program consists of educational and experiential requirements, including status as a CDA or SAC, an approved equivalent, or an exemption earned by education or employment history. This credential requirement has provided an incentive for providers who seek an Administrator Credential to first earn the SAC credential. While there is currently no infrastructure at the state level, in Palm Beach County public and private funding for the SAC credential has supported a collaboration of higher-education and training providers to develop a system of professional development that provides multiple career pathways for program staff. As an incentive, candidates who earn the SAC Credential, see an increase in their salary to \$10.50 per hour.

Indiana

The Indiana Youth Development Credential (IYD Credential), established through a grant from the Indiana Child Care Fund, leads the nation in combining competencies that recognize skills in

both youth development and child-care professions. The IYD Credential is based on 16 core competency areas encompassing youth development, families and communities, program environment, program content, and professionalism. The IYD Credential requires three college-level courses, an additional 45 hours of non-credit or college-credit training, a portfolio documenting skill development, two observations by an advisor, parent feedback through a survey process, and an observation by an independent evaluator. Scholarships for training expenses and/or certification costs are also available.

In the spring of 2005, with funding provided by the Benenson Foundation, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time conducted several focus groups and interviews with IYD participants, at that time 27 school-age practitioners in Indiana had received the IYD Credential. Almost unanimously, professionals who participated in the credentialing process reported that they benefited from their participation. In focus groups and interviews, practitioners reported that they developed a variety of new skills as a result of participation in the credential process, such as:

- Awareness of how to alter curriculum so that it fits youth with a variety of ability levels
- Ability to relate better to children and youth and other staff
- New/more creative ideas for working with youth participants
- Confidence when working with youths' parents/guardians
- Ability to articulate to others more clearly the value and impact of their work
- Ability to run the program more smoothly

Staff also reported that they felt more appreciated after having participated in the credential program. They reported that having the credential was a symbol of affirmation and acknowledgement of their skills; it made many of the women feel more confident in their professional role. Several women reported that having the credential made them feel more connected to their job. One woman reported that she felt that she was on more of a career path after receiving the credential. Many participants also reported that the coursework helped them to improve both their writing and speaking skills (Gannett and Israel, 2005).

Despite the overall good feelings and gains in competence and knowledge that the credential offers, low participation rates have been an obstacle to the success of the IYD credential. Originally, this credential was developed to serve three categories of workers: school-age care workers, residential workers, and youth workers. However, it has been successful only in attracting participants from the school-age care workforce. While there has been some effort to attract youth workers, none have participated.

The majority of the individuals participating in the IYD Credential cohorts had stopped their own formal education after high school. However, credits for the IYD Credential were given through a local university or college. For many of the candidates, the idea of attending classes on a college or university campus was intimidating. In order to make the participants feel more comfortable, the credential courses in both Evansville and Indianapolis were taught at community centers, churches, libraries, and professional development centers. However, seeing the value of overcoming participants' intimidation by a higher education environment, the instructor from Evansville took the candidates on a tour of the campus from which they were obtaining their credential. A few of the candidates have made the decision to return to school to obtain their bachelor's degree and credit the experience of working towards the credential for giving them the confidence to do this. The experience of the IYD Credential demonstrates that

many OST workers will need additional supports—beyond just financial—to truly take advantage of the opportunities that credentials can offer.

Massachusetts Department of Education – Advancing the Field

Advancing the Field, established by the Massachusetts Department of Education in 1999, was designed to engage institutions of higher education and others involved in professional development in the development and implementation of an early care and education training system. The system supports early childhood personnel as they progress along a professional and educational ladder. The project is funded with \$1.2 million dollars of federal special education funds and prepares teachers to work with young children with and without disabilities in order to increase the quality and availability of teachers who have the expertise to work with infants/toddlers, preschool, and school-aged children in inclusive settings.

Advancing the Field supports the development of a system that provides college credits for the CDA credential and for courses specific to school-age child-care resulting in the achievement of a college degree. Advancing the Field also provides scholarships for college degree programs to teachers currently teaching in child-care and Head Start programs.

Advancing the Field has supported approximately 700 teachers in early childhood settings to obtain a college degree. Fifteen community colleges (all of the community colleges in Massachusetts), four four-year institutions, five community agencies and the Department of Education collaborate to support early childhood teachers obtaining degrees. The student attrition rate for first-year students was low, twelve percent compared to the national attrition rate of forty-five percent for two-year colleges. Thirty-two percent of participants received increases in salaries as a result of their additional training.

Massachusetts – APEX

In a joint collaboration between Parents United for Child Care, Bunker Hill Community College, and the Child Care Institute, the Achieving Program Excellence (APEX) program was formed. APEX emerged as a college-level certificate program designed to train practitioners working in the OST field in Massachusetts. Originally designed as a model scholarship program, APEX introduces students to a wide range of learning services, activity planning, child and youth development content, supervision, community relations, and leadership skills. APEX aims to maximize student benefit through pairing students with quality advisors and linking coursework to practice at students' program sites.

In 2000, Parents United for Child Care designed an evaluation of the APEX process in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the program. The evaluation asked students to explore questions in two areas, personal and professional growth and the overall functioning of the APEX program.

As in the evaluation findings of other credential programs, many students reported the APEX program helped them enhance their communication and organizational skills, increase their ability to solve problems, and expand their capacity to effectively reflect. Participants reported that the APEX program increased their knowledge in such important areas as curriculum development, health and safety issues, diversity, and engaging children and staff. Furthermore, students reported that participation in the APEX program not only increased their understanding

of out-of-school time concepts, but it enabled them to improve the programs where they work and simultaneously advance their careers. Forty-three percent of students reported receiving a salary increase after completing the APEX program, and thirty-three percent were promoted to higher positions within their organizations (Breslin, Gredler and Lindamood, 2000).

Students acknowledged the importance of relationship building as a major contributing factor to their personal growth and success in the APEX program. They felt the relationships they established with colleagues while participating in the program were a great benefit and became their main motivation for completing the program. Prior to participation in the APEX program students claimed they often felt isolated and disconnected in their programs and got little or no support from other youth workers. The APEX program gave students a sense of belonging and awareness that there are other youth workers in the field facing the same challenges and issues (Breslin, Gredler and Lindamood, 2000).

Missouri – Youth Development Credential

In early 2005, Missouri initiated a professional development system for entry-level after-school staff. The first cohort of practitioners was invited to participate in a 60-hour pilot training program based in Kansas City. Thirty-six candidates completed the necessary training, submitted their materials for assessment, and were awarded the Missouri Youth Development Credential. As a requirement to obtain the credential each practitioner was expected to (1) write an autobiography; (2) exhibit understanding of six competency areas; (3) prepare a resource file; (4) solicit parents in their after-school programs to complete parent questionnaires; (5) have an independent observer assess their skills in 13 functional areas; and (6) prepare for and complete the Youth Development Credential oral interview. Candidates were also required to complete 120 hours of training, either through four three-hour college credits administered through Missouri Community College, through community-based training, or through a combination of both. AT&T Family Care Development Fund paid \$25 for each student to acquire the necessary material packet, which included the *Youth Development Credential Assessment System & Competency Standards* booklet, the observation instrument, and parent questionnaires.

Sixteen of those who were awarded the credential completed a self-assessment survey of the pilot project. Pre- and post-program surveys assessed participants' skill level before and after completion of the credential. Post-test results demonstrated that the credential training increased participant skills and enabled participants to exhibit greater competency in executing and conducting after-school programs. The pre-test showed that while the majority felt they possessed some or most of the skills needed, only 12 percent felt they possessed all of the skills needed to provide excellent after-school care. More than half (56 percent) believed they possessed "all the necessary skills" to conduct an "exemplary after school program" after they completed the credential training. Seventy-five percent of graduates in the self-assessment felt obtaining the credential increased their caretaking skills (Fuger, 2005).

Overall, two-thirds of participants felt the quality of the pilot project to be "excellent" and one-third rated the quality as "good." While some recommendations were made about the timeline of the pilot and the exclusion of specific topics, such as discipline problems, none of the participants felt the pilot project was unsuccessful. According to participant comments the credential pilot project was additionally useful for improving their teaching techniques and enabling them to enhance after-school learning environments (Mosley and Smith, 2004).

The Kansas City pilot project evaluation paved the way for establishing the Missouri Youth Development Credential. While the number of those who participated in both the pre- and post-test was small, the outcomes were significant.

New York State School Age Care Credential

The New York State School Age Care Credential was developed as a collaborative effort between the state Office of Children and Family Services, New York State School Age Care Coalition, and Cornell University Early Childhood Program. Since its inception in 2000, over 300 students have graduated from the credential program. The New York credential was developed to promote quality services to children and families by providing specific standards, training, and evaluation of school-age staff members and providers. The credential program offers an opportunity for those working with school-age children to learn new skills, demonstrate competence, and gain professional recognition in the youth worker arena.

The SAC Credential consists of seven competency areas in 14 functional areas: professionalism, child development, safety, health, out-of-school environments, physical, cognitive, communication, creative, self, social, guidance, families, and program management. In order to apply for the credential, candidates must provide care to school-age children in a center-based, school-based, or family child-care setting serving school-age children. Candidates must regularly work directly with school-age children and agree to be observed in their setting by endorsers.

In the credential program's fourth year of operation, the Cornell Early Childhood program began its initial two-pronged evaluation study of the project. The evaluation aimed first to analyze the effects of the credential on professional development and retention rates in the OST field and second to assess the impact of the credential on the quality of school-age programs. Between 2002 and 2006 a total of 432 questionnaires were collected from SAC credential participants throughout New York State. In order to evaluate the impact of the credential on program quality, pre- and post-program observations were conducted with participant and comparison groups during the 2004-2005 program year.

Preliminary evaluation findings suggest that 40 percent of participants received a raise as a result of earning the credential. Nearly half (46 percent) of those who received a raise reported their compensation increased at least \$1 per hour. Additionally, 31 percent took on a new job title or new responsibilities. Program quality observations were based on the seven-point *School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)*. Initial outcomes indicate that participation in the New York State School Age Care Credential program increased program quality. The most significant changes were observed in program activities, staff/youth interaction, program structure, and space. Changes were not observed in program quality for the comparison group (McCable & Cochran, 2006).

This evaluation is ongoing and data will continue to be gathered from those entering and exiting the credential program; however, the initial findings are promising. If credentialing programs can leverage an increase in compensation and augment program quality then retention in the OST field will one day, hopefully, be a concern of the past. When practitioners, like those in New York, display a desire for training and receive support from their superiors, the demand for youth worker credential programs may become prevalent and widespread.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF OST CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

	<i>Indiana Youth Development Credential</i>	<i>New York State School Age Credential</i>	<i>Michigan School-Age Credential Assessment System</i>	<i>Colorado School Age Certificate</i>
<i>Training Requirements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 135 contact hours of college level instruction/training that covers specified areas and levels of competence (12-15 Credits) • 3 of 15 credits may be non-credit. • Can substitute up to 45 hours of non-credit training that covers the competencies in place of up to 3 credits • 15 hours can be substituted for training • Minimum of 480 hours of experience working with children and youth • Must join a professional organization that reflects commitment to children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose between course work, community training or independent study to meet competencies training • Encouraged to take 120 hour course (running one year) offered by 16 host agencies. Varies across the state • Must have worked with school-age children for at least 480 hours within the last 3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 120 clock hours of formal school-age education and training within the past 5 years, with no fewer than ten hours in eight content areas. • 12 Semester hours • 480 hours of experience working with school-age children within the past 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and/or course work that covers the Level 1 Standards • minimum of 90 clock hours • 480 hours experience in a school age or youth program <p>* In the process of having coursework offered at a local community college</p>
<i>Documentation required for proof of competency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College transcripts • Certificates of completion • Portfolio • Resource File • Self assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource file • Self assessment, multiple observations, and parent surveys are also documented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource file • Self assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • six semester credits from a regionally-accredited college or university in school-age education or youth services <i>or</i> • either US Military School Age Credential or Montessori Certificate for elementary school teacher <i>or</i> • 80 percent competency on the challenge test to meet this educational requirement, when available • Portfolio of resources

	<i>Indiana Youth Development Credential</i>	<i>New York State School Age Credential</i>	<i>Michigan School-Age Credential Assessment System</i>	<i>Colorado School Age Certificate</i>
Demonstration of skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate must work with advisor who observes and provides feedback. • Independent reviewer will conduct observation, interview and conduct Assessment Team Meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate is assessed by Local Assessment Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate is assessed by Local Assessment Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations while working in a program
Eligibility Education Expiration Funding	<p>Age: 18 years or older</p> <p>Experience: Must work with children and youth</p> <p>Education: No formal education beyond high school diploma or post-secondary education unrelated to the field of study</p> <p>Expiration: IYD Credential is valid for 3 years from award and can be renewed for 5 year periods</p> <p>Funding : Grant through Indiana child care fund</p>	<p>Education: High school diploma or equivalent</p> <p>Experience: Must currently provide direct care to school-age children in a center, at a school site, or in family or group family day care settings</p> <p>Expiration: School-Age Care Credential is valid for 3 years.</p> <p>Funding: New York State School Age Care Coalition, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Cornell University.</p>	<p>Age: 18 years or older</p> <p>Education: High school diploma or equivalent.</p> <p>Experience: Must be currently caring for children in a school-age program</p> <p>Funding: Michigan Department of Human Services and Michigan 4C Association</p>	<p>Age: 18 years or older</p> <p>Expiration: valid for three years and is renewable twice</p> <p>Funding :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issued by the Colorado Department of Human Services and Smart Start Colorado Office of Professional Development. • Oversight by the Community College of Denver Center for Career and Professional
Fee/ Scholarship	T.E.A.C.H. covers 80 percent of the cost or \$127.50 per credit hour max. A \$325.00 lay over fee for the assessment is the responsibility of the candidate.	The Educational Incentive Program	Michigan 4C Association offers a limited number of scholarships for the full cost of the SAC Assessment (up to \$355 per eligible candidate)	

	<i>Military School Age Credential</i>	<i>Wisconsin School Age Credential</i>	<i>Florida School Age Certification Program</i>	<i>Missouri Youth Development Credential (pilot phase)</i>
<i>Training Requirements/ Courses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must complete Army Foundation Level Individual Development Plan (IDP) before applying for MSAC • MSAC must be completed within 12 months following the completion of the School-Age Foundational Level Training IDP • Receive training in 13 training modules using teaching strategies curriculum - not college credit courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have 480 hours of experience working with school-age children within the past five years • Must have 120 hours of formal school-age care education and training within the past five years 	<p>120-hour training program includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Part I of training for School-Age Child Care Personnel • Minimum of 80 hours of training using the Dept. of Children and Family services approved curriculum • 480 hours in direct contact with children in school age setting 	<p>120 clock hours of training is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • either 120 community-based clock hours, college credit • or a combination of these two alternatives delivered in four 6-hour training sessions
<i>Documentation required for proof of competency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource file <p>All work must be based on work within 12 months of the date Candidate submits Assessment Request Form.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource file 	<p>LEVEL ONE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource File <p>LEVEL TWO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Level I requirements • Completion of Parental Feedback Questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio • Resource File
<i>Demonstration of skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five observations by Local Assessment Team • Competence evaluation by the Council for Professional Recognition • Oral interview by military school age rep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Assessment Team reviews the information about the candidate and makes a recommendation 	<p>LEVEL ONE</p> <p>Oral interview conducted by advisor. Formal observations working with children in a school-age setting</p> <p>LEVEL TWO</p> <p>Oral interview and formal observations Local assessment team meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YDC Oral Interview and YDC Studies Review • Independent observer assesses candidate skills in the 13 functional areas during a 3 hours assessment.

	<i>Military School Age Credential</i>	<i>Wisconsin School Age Credential</i>	<i>Florida School Age Certification Program</i>	<i>Missouri Youth Development Credential (pilot phase)</i>
<i>Eligibility Education Expiration Funding</i>	<p>Setting: Must work in a Department of Defense school-age program and be observed working as the lead</p> <p>Expiration: Valid for three years</p>	<p>Age: 18 years or older</p> <p>Education: High school diploma or GED</p> <p>Funding: volunteer basis</p>	<p>Age: 18 years or older</p> <p>Education: High school diploma or GED</p> <p>Expiration: To maintain a valid Florida School-Age Certification, candidates must provide documentation every 5 years that they have obtained at least 4.5 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or one three-hour college-credit course in a school-age child-care curriculum area Coursework completed to renew a State of Florida Teaching Certificate also satisfies the requirement for renewal of the Florida School-Age Certification</p> <p>Funding: Florida Department of Children and Families</p>	<p>Funding: Pilot was funded by ATT; Penn Valley Community College paid the salaries of the instructors. Bureau of Child Care and ATT provided scholarships for 52 candidates</p>
<i>Fees and Scholarships</i>	150.00 application fee	T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship	Tuition: 227.00	25.00 packet of materials
<i>Courses</i>	Caring for Curriculum	<p>At least 12 hours(non-credit based) in each area: child growth and development; behavior guidance; safe, healthy environment; physical and intellectual development; social and emotional development; relationships with families; program operation and supervision</p> <p>Candidates may accumulate the hours from a single provider or from a combination of providers.</p>	<p>Part I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules & Regulations (2) • Child Abuse & Neglect (4) • Health, Safety & Nutrition (4) • Developmentally Appropriate Practices - <i>School Age</i> (10) <p>Part II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing Youth Development (20) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamentals of Afterschool I • Fundamentals of Afterschool II • Health, Safety, and Nutrition • Becoming a Teacher <p>This selection of courses provides the required 8 college hours, along with 4 additional hours that could be applied to renewal of the Youth Development Credential</p>